

# **Community Assistantship Program**

## **Rochester in Support of Everyone Focus Group Summaries and List of Resources**

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# **Rochester in Support of Everyone Focus Group Summaries and List of Resources**

Conducted on behalf of  
Rochester Diversity Council

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CAP Report 022

## **CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION**

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs  
University of Minnesota  
330 Humphrey Center**



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## Executive Summary

This project was a follow-up to one conducted by research assistant Leanne Baylor through the CAP program and Rochester's Diversity Council. Ms. Baylor organized focus groups of ethnic groups in Rochester, then prepared a report of her findings for the mainstream Rochester community. This report looks at the same research material, but is aimed at the minority Rochester community. In addition, an annotated list of resources in the Rochester area was compiled for the use of the minority community and recent immigrants.

This report found that the different minority groups of Rochester have a great deal in common. Most of the international immigrants flee war and come to Rochester in search of a peaceful place to raise their families. Other groups, such as the African Americans and Native Americans, have points in common with the international immigrants, such as difficulty finding decent affordable housing and a living wage. All groups mentioned cultural differences and discrimination as points of concern.

*Rochester and Diversity Council*

**"To me, Rochester is a land of opportunity. They have nice high paying jobs, they have got a nice area. What I liked when I first came to Rochester is the way the streets were so clean, you know. And when you come from the ghetto or from some other suburbs, ... you don't see the streets as clean as you see them here, or the houses looking as neatly as they do. That's what I want for me and my children."**

**– RISE focus group participant**

Rochester, Minnesota has much to offer its residents. The city is clean and safe, boasts good schools, and was rated a Number One City by Money Magazine. Known worldwide for its top-quality medical facility and research institution, the Mayo Clinic brings people of all nationalities to Rochester in search of safety and a brighter future. Another pillar of the local economy is IBM, an innovator in technology.

In the last twenty years, the face of Rochester has been changing. New arrivals such as Somalis, Cambodians, and Bosnians are sometimes surprising for long-time residents, who are accustomed to the relative isolation which historically characterized Rochester. What many people don't realize is that Rochester, like the rest of the United States, has a long history of cultural intolerance. Beginning with the Indian Wars, difference was seen as a threat to be overpowered. Anti-Irish and anti-German sentiment in the early twentieth century shows that new arrivals are always feared, but eventually become a part of the mainstream community.

In 1989 the Diversity Council was created to (as its mission statement says) "help build a community where the attitudes and actions of its people foster mutual respect so that all people can fully participate in the community." Diversity Council works chiefly with education, and has sponsored this booklet as a profile of minority groups in Rochester for

use by those same groups. At the end of the booklet you will find a list of resources which you might find useful.

### *RISE: Rochester in Support of Everyone*

Diversity Council works to insure that people of all ethnicities and races, even recent arrivals and international immigrants, are able to take advantage of Rochester's ample opportunities. In order to better assess the concerns of the minority communities in the city, the Diversity Council created a focus group project called RISE (Rochester In Support of Everyone). In the first phase, nine ethnic groups were contacted, and seven participated in focus groups. These discussion groups met to share opinions on a standard set of seven questions:

- Tell us your name, and describe your first impressions of Rochester when you moved here.
- Where did/do you find the most useful information and help in getting settled in the Rochester community?
- What makes members of your community stay in Rochester, and what makes members of your community leave Rochester?
- What specific skills and assets do people from your specific community bring to Rochester and, in your opinion, how does the greater Rochester community benefit from them?
- What would you like other people to know about the culture and traditions of your community, and what things about your community are misunderstood here?
- Within your community, what are the biggest challenges (or problems) for you and others living in Rochester?
- In your opinion, if we could improve one problem immediately, what should it be?

The responses to these questions were arranged into the second phase of the RISE project, a booklet to educate the mainstream community about Rochester's minorities. You

hold the third phase in your hands: a booklet about the minority communities, for the minority communities, to promote cultural tolerance and empowerment.

### *First Impressions*

**“My first impressions of Rochester was conservative and kind of cold, distant.”**

**“Smiley.”**

**“They seem cold, but most of them are not. But you have to be here a while to deal with that.”**

**“You come here it's a very quiet city, and — but after, you know, getting along with people, and after a while I just learned the culture and get used to the environments here. And it make everybody feel right.”**

**– RISE focus group participants**

Though first impressions of Rochester varied greatly, most focus group participants described very positive experiences. They cited the city's clean and safe environment, as well excellent hospitals, schools, and adult education opportunities, as reasons they liked the city. Employment proved to be a strong factor in whether or not a family stayed in Rochester: those with jobs prefer to stay, while others pointed out a small job market with limited wages as a reason to move on. Similarly, ties to the local community kept people in Rochester, but if friends and family lived in other locations, minorities often felt isolated and moved away.

Relocation is a daunting proposition; moving to the opposite side of the planet and adjusting to a new culture can be overwhelming. The best help in getting started, RISE



participants said, was to be found with family and friends in the Rochester area. Many groups mentioned local churches and IMAA as helpful orientation resources. A few people also cited counselors, teachers, or mentors.

**“You name it, we deliver it. If people here are open-minded enough to allow us to prosper, we in turn as a whole community will prosper. But likewise, if we get driven away, we will take (our skills) somewhere else.” – RISE focus group participant**

All the RISE focus groups highlighted a strong work ethic among the skills their ethnic group brings to Rochester. Some groups stressed that their experience of adapting to a new culture had trained them to learn quickly; even non-English speakers can acquire job skills by imitating a demonstration. In addition, the professional training and experience of many participants brings specialized knowledge to the local job market.

**“We are not here to commit any kind of violent crimes. We are here to prosper. We are here to make good lives for ourselves and for our children.” – RISE focus group participant**

A strong community orientation and religious faith were mentioned as cultural assets that the minorities bring to Rochester. Many cultures emphasize sacrifice on behalf of the children, and elders are often highly respected; this group orientation promotes a strong sense of responsibility for the community as a whole. Religions among the respondents varied from Christianity to Buddhism, Islam to animism, but all groups stressed the neighborly principles fundamental to their faiths, which encourage good will, perseverance, and honesty. Finally, we must not forget the cultural diversity that minorities bring to Rochester. Their cultural celebrations, worldly perspective, and varied personal experiences enrich the community and are invaluable in our ever-quickenning global village.

### *Employment and Housing Challenges*

All of the focus groups cited concerns regarding employment and housing. Several participants had found satisfying jobs easily, but, more frequently, others pointed out that few jobs are available at one time, and not enough entry-level jobs offer a livable, family-supporting wage. In addition, the significant professional training and experience often brought by international immigrants is not accessed, because foreign countries follow different licensing and certification procedures. As a result, many professionals find themselves frustrated with basic, unchallenging employment.

Housing was another concern common to all focus groups. A lack of affordable, decent housing was the most often-mentioned problem, and many people cited the housing shortage as a major reason for minorities to leave Rochester. Several participants mentioned experiences with "clustering", in which rental agencies steered people into certain areas based on their ethnicity. This unfair practice deprives all Rochester residents of the opportunity to live in a diverse neighborhood, promoting ignorance instead of tolerance. Finally, renting a home is often a new experience for international immigrants, and the paperwork and other expectations involved are easily confusing.

Both employment and housing challenges, according to the focus group participants, were complicated by cultural misunderstandings. Employers might not understand a worker's religious needs and restrictions. Neighbors can feel threatened when large parties take place nearby, as is the custom of some ethnic groups in Rochester. A landlord might

not understand that many foreign cultures promote extended families living together in one house, instead of the American tradition of each nuclear family unit living separately.

### *Cultural Difficulties*

The unwritten rules of conduct in Rochester can be very strange for immigrants, causing misunderstandings with mainstream culture. For example, the Vietnamese participants emphasized that in their culture, it is rude to look most people in the eye; at a job interview they respectfully look down, but the American interviewer can easily interpret this as dishonesty or lack of confidence. Other groups pointed out that loud discussions are the norm in their native culture, but Americans often understand it to be fighting or trouble-making. In addition, what the American system calls "abuse", is simply "child discipline" in other countries.

**"The kids are suddenly twisted, turned all the way to the American system.... They don't understand anything from our old country. So there is a big collision from there. That's hardest part." – RISE focus group participant**

Another concern among international focus groups was the generation divide, or large difference between parents' and children's knowledge of the world. In the schools and with their new friends, children learn English and American culture more quickly than their parents. This contrast gives children new power as translators for the older generation. Parents have difficulty understanding their child's new life, and sometimes they assume that a child is misbehaving. Parents feel isolated and helpless when their child controls

communication with the outside world and, at the same time, the new system prohibits them from following their traditional methods of discipline. The low wages usually earned by these parents requires that they work additional hours to support their family, leaving little time for English classes and other educational opportunities.

**“Of course, everyone needs money everywhere in the world. But she left her country, she left her homeland, all her relatives behind not because of only money. The money is not the main point. The main point is liberty. Freedom.” – RISE focus group participant**

Many focus groups described encounters in which the larger community didn't understand why they came to Rochester. The Hmong, Laotian and Vietnamese groups aided Americans in the Vietnam War, and in some cases they were enlisted by the C.I.A. to fight North Vietnamese along the Ho Chi Minh trail. Many people lost their families in the American war before coming to Rochester. Other groups are refugees or came here on a sponsorship program.

Finally, discrimination was a topic of discussion in all the focus groups, though most participants were reluctant to use that highly political word, choosing instead to place the blame on mutual misunderstandings. Members of the immigrant community work hard to learn the informal rules, or culture, of Rochester, as the mainstream community focuses on welcoming the new arrivals with cultural tolerance.

## *The Somalis*

Somalia lies on the Horn of Africa, with coastline on the Gulf of Aden to the north, and on the Indian Ocean to the east. Most of the country is covered with flat semidesert or savannas (dry, grassy plains); the capital city is Mogadishu. 99% of Somalis are Sunni Muslim and speak the Somali language, making Somalia one of the most homogenous countries in Africa. Arabic is the second official national language, and many Somalis speak English or Italian, due to the colonial influence of those countries. About half of Somalis today are nomadic, which makes the typical Somali a very independent, freedom-loving person.

Somalia was declared independent of its British and Italian colonizers in 1960. Since then, the country has weakened economically and deteriorated into clan warfare, leaving 45% of the population displaced by 1992. The civil war destroyed Somalia's wheat fields and caused widespread famine, especially in the south. In addition, Mogadishu was ripped apart, disease is rampant, and living conditions continue to fall. Today over 1 million Somalis have fled the country.

Approximately 3,500 of these individuals now call Rochester their home; Somalis form the largest group of recent immigrants to Rochester. Their peak arrival years were 1996 and 1997, and many attend the Islamic Center in Rochester, which joins Muslims of different cultural groups together. Despite cultural differences with mainstream Rochester community, the Somalis come here for peace and look forward to improving their lives in safety.

## *The Cambodians*

Cambodia (also known as Kampuchea) is located west of Vietnam and southeast of Thailand, and includes coastline on the Gulf of Thailand to the east. The Khmer people constitute the vast majority of Cambodians, creating a strong sense of national identity. Cambodia is overwhelmingly village-based, with the family as the fundamental social unit. Most Cambodians live in the central plain near the Tonle Sap (Great Lake), which expands and shrinks annually with rainwater. During the rainy season the lake covers rice fields, and during the dry season the exposed crop is harvested.

The ancient Khmer state once controlled much of the Indochinese Peninsula and culturally influenced all of Southeast Asia. The empire built a beautiful temple complex, Angkor Wat, which is still the largest religious construction in the world. Most Cambodians are Buddhist, and aspire to be wise and compassionate, ideals of Theravada Buddhist teachings.

Following complete independence from France in 1953, international pressures and a civil war led to the bloody Khmer Rouge regime. The new communist government favored agrarian workers and instituted a city depopulation program, which emptied Phnom Penh (the national capital) and Cambodia's towns in less than one week. Dictator Pol Pot led secret policy-makers in a strict adherence to unrealistic goals, and over a million Cambodians died of famine, disease, overwork or execution in following years. Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge were in power from 1975 until their overthrow in 1979.

Many Cambodians fled the horrifying conditions of their homeland in the late 1970's, and by 1982 approximately 4-5,000 had arrived in Rochester. Today the community is much smaller at around 2,000 individuals, because many Cambodians left Rochester for



larger communities in the Twin Cities, Boston, or other cities in the United States. Many of Rochester's Cambodian residents are members of the Buddhist temple in Rochester.

### *The Bosnians*

The Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires all took a turn controlling present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, and each left contributions to the country's cultural and ethnic diversity. Ethnic Serbs, Croats and Bosnians live in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina; each of these groups has a different religion (Serbian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Islam, respectively) and cultural practices. After World War II, these differences were stifled through the communist government's control of religion, speech, and cultural life. The death of dictator Josip Broz (Tito) in 1990, however, allowed longstanding ethnic tensions to rekindle, and the country spiraled into civil war. News of ethnic cleansing, concentration camps and refugees peppered American airwaves throughout the war. In 1995, a Dayton, Ohio agreement established the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is comprised of two largely autonomous entities, each with its own president and legislature.

There are approximately 600 Bosnians living in Rochester, many of them refugees from the war who seek stable peace and the opportunity to raise their families in safety. The Bosnians are sometimes thought to form one homogenous group in Rochester, but in fact they are from all sides of the Bosnia and Herzegovina conflict. To ease political tensions and to build community, the local Bosnia and Herzegovina Association focuses on cultural similarities between the groups. The organization coordinates social events, such as

children's programs, picnics and family gatherings, and international events to celebrate mutual Bosnian holidays, which include New Year's, Labor Day, and Women's Day, among others. These social gatherings help to ease the isolation many Bosnian families feel after leaving Bosnia & Herzegovina, where social involvement in the community was very important.

### *The African Americans*

Africans were among the first non-natives in the New World, but they did not come here as free colonizers in search of a better life; rather, they came in chains and were forced to work as slaves in a foreign land. African slaves were treated brutally, in spite of the complex and accomplished societies in their homeland. Time and complete isolation from Africa gradually changed the slaves' cultural identification as they became Americans. Though slavery was abolished in 1863, African Americans continued to live as second-class citizens due to Jim Crow laws and the racist prejudices of mainstream culture.

In the twentieth century many of African Americans from the South moved to northern cities in search of new opportunity. They were usually disappointed to find conditions that weren't much better than those they had fled: substandard housing, low-paying jobs, and racism were common. In the 1960's the civil rights movement and leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., brought attention to the unfair treatment of non-Anglo Americans, and conditions slowly improved. Nonetheless, the long history of slavery and discrimination continues to shape the African American community.

Northern-bound migration brought many African Americans to cities like Chicago and Minneapolis. In more recent years they have begun to branch out into smaller cities and towns in the Midwest and Northeast, including Rochester, Minnesota. Many of them have trouble finding well-paid jobs and decent housing, and some encounter racial prejudice.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is celebrated nationally in mid-January to honor the peaceful vision of Dr. King. Rochester's local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) meets regularly to advocate for the equal rights of African Americans and other people of color.

As with the case of Native Americans, it would be unfair to draw exaggerated parallels between African Americans and other groups discussed in this booklet. They are not recent arrivals to the United States, but they suffer from similar prejudices of the mainstream community. Compared with other areas of the United States, there are very few African Americans living in southeastern Minnesota, and many of them have moved here in recent years. These similarities with international immigrants merit their inclusion in this booklet.

### *The Vietnamese*

Following French colonization and the two Indochina wars, in 1954 a ravaged Vietnam was divided into democratic South Vietnam and communist North Vietnam. The next two decades saw intensified hostility between the nations, as world powers of democracy and communism struggled in the small tropical countries. The Vietnam War sparked a downward spiral in the Vietnamese economy, resulting in hunger and a low

standard of living. In addition, the victorious communist government strictly punished American sympathizers, and between 1975 and 1990, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese fled their homeland. Many came to the United States, and approximately 1500 live in Rochester today.

Vietnam has a tropical climate and extensive coastline. It contains two river deltas, linked by a long, narrow mountain chain. The Vietnamese include many different cultural groups: ethnic Vietnamese traditionally live in the lowlands, while minority groups, such as ethnic Cambodians or Hmong, live in the highlands. In addition, the Vietnamese divide themselves into northern, central, and southern Vietnamese, as separate cultural groups. The majority of Vietnamese are Buddhist, but many, especially among emigrant groups, are Catholic.

Most Vietnamese come from small, close-knit communities, where the family is very important. Rochester's Vietnamese continue this tradition, and the family-based community forms a strong support network for individuals. Vietnamese language and culture classes are offered for children on Saturdays at IMAA. Rochester's Vietnamese Catholics are well-organized around church, and secular organizations form for specific events, such as the Children's Day in the summer and the Vietnamese New Year celebration, called Tet, which lasts for seven days and falls on a different day each year. The entire Rochester community is invited to these gatherings.

### *The Sudanese*

Located in the northeastern part of the continent and bordering the Red Sea, the Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Khartoum, the national capital, lies at the juncture of

the White Nile and the Blue Nile rivers, which bisect the country from north to south. The Sudan contains diverse ecological areas, including lush tropical jungles in the south, desert in the north, and grassy plains in the central region. 4/5 of the country's inhabitants live in rural areas, and the national language is Arabic.

The Sudan has been a crossroads between Africa and the Mediterranean since ancient times. Different cultural groups occupy the country, which divides into two cultural areas. The majority of northern Sudanese are Sunni Muslim and consider themselves Arabs, while in the south a variety of languages and religions are practiced, including English and Christianity.

The Sudan became independent of British and Egyptian rule in 1956, but numerous changes in government, declarations of martial law, military coups, and civil war have plagued the Sudanese ever since. Increased contact between the north and the south has fired different opinions as to how the country should be governed. The north prefers strict Islamic law, or Shari'a, while the south wants a secular government. Decades of warfare, in addition to droughts and famine and an infrastructure stressed by massive immigration from neighboring countries, have forced over 200,000 Sudanese to leave their country.

Approximately 300 Sudanese, most of them from the south, have found their way to Rochester in search of a peaceful life. Most Sudanese in Rochester speak Arabic and practice Christianity; many attend the Covenant Church, where they have their own service, and St. Luke's. In addition, the Sudanese have started a local, private organization, called New Sudan American Hope.

## *The Native Americans*

Native American (also called American Indian) groups had been living on the American continent for thousands of years when the first Europeans arrived. The land we know today as Minnesota was occupied by the Sioux tribes in the south, and by Ojibwa (also known as Chippewa) tribes in the north. These groups had different languages and cultural customs, but their ways of life were similar: they lived in large communities in the summer and moved into smaller groups during the difficult winter months. The "Indians", as they were called after Columbus mistook America for India, were maltreated and pushed onto reservations by European colonizers and settlers looking for private farmland, and a high percentage of Native Americans died within 100 years of colonization.

Today the Sioux number about 40,000 and live mainly on reservations in the Dakotas and in other western states. The Ojibwa number about 30,000 in the United States and 50,000 in Canada, and many live on reservations in northern Minnesota. Native Americans also live in cities throughout the country, and many of them balance life between two places, in order to take advantage of opportunities in the cities as they maintain cultural ties to the reservation community.

Plains tribes, especially the Dakota Sioux, quarried a sacred red stone in present-day southwestern Minnesota. They used the stone to make highly valued peacepipes, which they traded with other Native tribes. Today, the Pipestone National Monument protects the quarries and surrounding land, and educates the public about Native traditions.

Native American in Rochester come from many tribes from all over the continent. It would be ridiculous to refer to them as immigrants, since they were, of course, the original Americans. Nonetheless, Native Americans struggle to maintain their traditions in a



prejudiced world, and in this respect they have a great deal in common with Rochester's international immigrants.

### *The Hmong and Lao*

Laos, one of the poorest countries in the world, is located between Vietnam and Thailand. The landlocked country is covered with forested mountains and rural, rice-farming communities of many different cultural groups, some of which have immigrated to Rochester in search of peace and stability. The Hmong and Laotians have been present in Rochester since 1975, with the peak immigration years taking place around 1980; immigration today has nearly stopped. The Hmong and Lao community in the Twin Cities totals approximately 80,000, the largest in the United States.

The Hmong and Lao come from a similar area of Laos, but they are very different cultures. Laotian groups in Rochester include Lao-Tin and Lao-Hu, the two largest, in addition to Lao-Lue and Lowland Lao families. In Rochester today there are approximately 100 Laotian families which occasionally interact for cultural events, even though they speak different dialects of Lao and consider themselves to be separate groups. Most Laotians are Buddhist.

There are approximately 40 Hmong families in Rochester today. They speak the Hmong language and come from Vietnam and southern China, in addition to Laos; the Hmong have historically moved from place to place, and do not define a specific homeland. The Hmong were originally spirit and ancestor worshippers, but since colonization many have become Catholic.

The area we now call Laos has been controlled by Siam and by France, and war has embroiled the nation especially since 1959. During the Vietnam War, the Hmong community was secretly trained by the CIA to aid the American army. When the American army lost the war and evacuated, they left behind many Hmong who could not survive punishment for treason by the new Communists government. Many Hmong were forced to leave Laos and Vietnam, often by fleeing to refugee camps in Thailand and later moving to the United States. The transition to an American way of life is very difficult, especially for rural, illiterate farmers, but the Hmong and Laotian communities are learning to balance tradition with the demands of a new home.

### *The Latinos*

Many Americans are surprised to learn that the current southwest third of the United States was once a part of Mexico. In 1848, the treaty ending the Mexican-American war ceded a huge swath of land, from Texas to Colorado and Northern California, to the United States. All the Mexicans living in that area suddenly became Americans, even as they maintained their Mexican traditions and Spanish language.

When the Spaniards invaded and populated present-day Mexico hundreds of years ago, they wanted to find gold and expand the Catholic Church. Instead, they found large and complex indigenous societies, the Maya and Aztecs. Intermarriage produced a rich cultural heritage which forms an important part of Mexican identity.

Latinos, or people who trace their cultural heritage to Latin America, have been present in Minnesota ever since European settlers began arriving. Since World War II they

have come in increasing numbers to work seasonally in the agricultural sector; many of these workers decided to stay as permanent Minnesota residents. Because the United States shares a border with Mexico, most Latinos in Minnesota are Mexican who have come here through Texas or California. They are joined by people from El Salvador, Santo Domingo, and Guatemala, among many other countries.

The Latino community in Rochester has been growing steadily since the mid-1990's, and today it numbers approximately 1800-2000 individuals. Community organization centers around local churches. Most Latinos are Roman Catholic, but many in Rochester attend the Baptist and Pentecostal churches, as well as Catholic. Latinos hope for a life full of opportunity for their children, and enjoy sharing their cultural heritage with others.

*So, now what?*

**"I consider myself American, and yet I keep my culture. ... I don't always do things the American way, so when I do ... my own culture way, there's a barrier there trying to make (Americans) understand." – RISE focus group participant**

Each cultural group has its own history and special point of view, but the RISE focus groups demonstrated tremendous similarities among the different ethnic minorities of Rochester. They all look for work opportunities and a safe place to raise their families, and many are relatively recent arrivals to southwestern Minnesota and work hard to adjust to the local culture.

The international groups are especially similar: most seek refuge from war, famine and disease. Indeed, striking parallels can be drawn between groups that seem at first glance

to be very different. For example, the Somalis and the Hmong traditionally move from place to place; they are fiercely independent peoples who might have trouble adapting to the sedentary American lifestyle. The Cambodians and the Bosnians also seem very different, but both groups suffered horrifying genocide in the last twenty years, much like the American Indians did before them.

Perhaps the most unifying aspect of the diverse minority groups in Rochester is simply that: they are minorities in a town, which, until recently, was largely homogenous. The mainstream population seemed reserved and distant to many people in the RISE focus groups. As one participant said, "They seem cold, but most of them are not. But you have to be here a while to deal with that." Still, a larger number of focus group participants remarked on the friendliness of people in Rochester. Perhaps the town is shy at first, but happy to makes friends with a recent arrival who makes the first step by introducing him/herself.

Minorities in the United States have a higher index of poverty, lower high school completion rates, and lower average salaries than the mainstream community, creating stresses for families. In the case of many Rochester minorities, these problems are added to the difficult adjustment to life in a new country. As if that weren't enough, all minorities suffer some degree of discrimination by the mainstream community.

How can we combat these overwhelming problems?

There are no easy answers, but one good way to start is by learning from our collective history. Many of Rochester's recent arrivals flee conflicts caused by ethnic tensions, in which one group dislikes another for religious, historical or political reasons. Americans too are guilty of this: they waged a war of arms and disease against the American Indians to acquire their land.

Here in Rochester, as in the rest of the world, the best way of life is one of harmony and good will between neighbors. In the end, we all have much more in common than we are different.

**“There is serious frustration with white kids, because they don't really know what's going on. They don't understand the history because the (multicultural) history was blocked out from them too.” – RISE focus group participant**

Many of the difficulties discussed in this booklet stem from cultural misunderstandings and ignorance. Be it a simple lack of knowledge or blatant racism, ignorance can be combated with education. No one's saying that change is easy, but as the best way to combat ignorance, education is worth it. Incorporate cultural exchange into your daily life by participating in community-wide events, especially those sponsored by an ethnic group new to you. Meet your neighbors and talk about your different cultures, and show pictures of your homeland to your child's classroom. Investigate opportunities for daycare in your native language, which would teach non-English-speaking children about their native culture, and lessen the generational gap between parents and children; you might even consider opening such a daycare facility in your own home. Though it may be difficult, politely correct the misunderstandings you see every day. If everyone does his or her part, ignorance will slowly be replaced with tolerance.

**“From Martin Luther all the way up to where we are at now, if we don't pave the way for our kids, show them the strength and which way to go, nobody else will.”**

**“My wish is to improve, to educate American people to accept diversity and understand different backgrounds. ... And that will solve most of the problems.”**

**– RISE focus group participants**

## **List of Resources**

### **Intercultural Mutual Aid Association (IMAA)**

16 SW Seventh Avenue. (507) 289-5960.

IMAA offers many programs for immigrants to the Rochester area. The Youth and Family Program offers education, case management, inter-generational activities, and crime prevention services. The Community Development Program and Bridges Program offers cultural presentations, crisis intervention, and access services. The Self-Sufficiency Program offers pre- and post-employment instruction, job search assistance, and retention support services. The Victim Services Program offers bilingual support and advocacy to crime victims. Other services include immigration process assistance, interpreting and translating.

### **CommunityNet's First Call For Help**

(507) 287-7111 or (800) 543-7709 toll-free in Minnesota. [www.c-net.org](http://www.c-net.org)

CommunityNet's First Call For Help offers a free information and referral service through telephone and internet, 24 hours a day and seven days a week, with access to language interpreters. It maintains a comprehensive community resource database of area human service agencies, in addition to coordinating area volunteer efforts. Many services in this booklet (as well as others) can be accessed or described in more detail through First Call for Help. Examples of referrals: from basic needs to legal services (including immigration assistance and landlord/tenant assistance), education (including English as a Second Language, GED, and adult basic ed.), health care (emergency medical services; diagnostic, treatment and support services, and others), support groups/counseling, crisis referrals, and much more.

### **Rochester Diversity Council**

220 S Broadway, Suite 105. (507) 282-9951. [www.diversitycouncil.org](http://www.diversitycouncil.org)

The mission of Diversity Council is to help build a community where the attitudes and actions of its people foster mutual respect so that all people can fully participate in the community. We actively support communities and their organizations, and celebrate difference as a powerful tool to bring new ideas and flexibility to a community. Educational workshops, speakers and videos, as well as literature and referrals, are available.

### **Dorothy Day Hospitality House**

703 1st St SW. (507) 282-5172.

Free homeless shelter for individuals and families. Includes dinner; no alcohol or drugs allowed. House closed 9-4 every day.



**Rochester Housing Authority**

2122 Campus Drive SE. (507) 285-8224.

Rental and home improvement/ownership assistance; no fee to apply.

**Rochester/Olmsted Community Housing Partnership**

2116 Campus Drive SE, Suite 10. (507) 281-7396.

Home buyer assistance, including home ownership education and home loan counseling.

**Habitat for Humanity**

PO Box 456. (507) 252-0849.

We build and repair housing in partnership with working low-income members of the community. Housing is built/repared with volunteer labor and donated materials, then sold at no interest and no profit to a partner family.

**Rochester Women's Shelter**

(507) 285-1010.

Temporary safe home for women and their children. 24 hour emergency assistance, with advocacy and support services. Multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and with hearing impaired services. The shelter is confidential, free, and staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**Rochester Public Schools**

615 Seventh Street SW. (507) 285-8551.

Pre-kindergarten through grade 12, with a full range of support services.

**Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR)**

126 Woodlake Drive SE. (507) 287-2020.

CCRR offers child care financial assistance, Head Start, a crisis nursery program, nursery school scholarships, parent education, referrals to child care programs, training for child care providers, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Family Support Network.

**Mayo Clinic**

200 First Street SW.

(507) 284-2511 – General Information

(507) 284-5165 – Community Internal Medicine (in the Baldwin Building)

(507) 284-5151 – Urgent Care Center (in the Baldwin Building)

**Y Resource Center**

706 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue SW. (507) 287-2265.

Offers a wide variety of classes and support groups for children, adults, and families.

**YMCA**

709 First Avenue SW. (507) 287-2260, Lori Johnson, ext 352.

After-school academic enrichment program, for students at least one grade behind and not involved in extra-curricular activities, from Holmes, Hawthorne, Ben Franklin, Pinewood, or Longfellow Schools.

**Y Mentors (through the YMCA)**

334 SE 16<sup>th</sup> Street. (507) 287-2401.

Community-based, cross-cultural enrichment program for school-aged youth: with individualized social, recreational and learning experiences aimed at empowering each youth to engage in positive relationships and behaviors, both now and in the future. Bilingual Partners are involved in all facets of the program. Short- and long-term programs.

**Rochester Family Services (RFS)**

903 W Center Street, Suite 220. (800) 936-4054.

(507) 287-2010 – Administration and Home Services

(507) 287-2040 – Counseling

(507) 281-6299 – Consumer Credit

RFS offers comprehensive counseling for individuals, families, and the chemically dependent; a homemaker service and chore help; Meals on Wheels (hot meals delivered to the chronically/acutely ill or physically limited); Senior Assistance (provides transportation for seniors over 60). Consumer Credit Counseling offers budget counseling, debt management plans, and community education for all ages. The Adult Substance Abuse Project offers quality, contemporary alcohol and other drug abuse programs, including chemical health education in short-term, small group classes. No one will be refused service because of an inability to pay.

**American Red Cross International Services**

310 14<sup>th</sup> St. SE (55904). Call Lois Hamilton at (507) 287-2200.

All Red Cross chapters must provide tracing services to help people who have been separated from their family members in another country by war, civil disturbances, natural disasters, and other calamities. Chapters also provide information about human services in the areas of immigration.

**Catholic Charities/Catholic Social Services of Rochester**

117 East Center Street, Suite B. (507) 287-2047.

Provides family, individual, and group counseling for persons with individual, marital, or parent-child problems. Works with adoptions and guardian/conservatorship, and can be involved with custody study evaluations and child advocacy in court. The Hispanic Ministries Program helps parishes develop ministry resources for migrant and resident Hispanics. The refugee resettlement program settles one hundred to three hundred refugees annually.

**Human Rights Commission/Alternative Dispute Resolution Services (ADR)**

Government Center Human Resources. 151 Fourth Street SE. (507) 287-2249.

If you feel that you have been the victim of discrimination, you may file a complaint with the Human Rights Commission, which offers no-fault mediation, a neutral process to attempt to reach a settlement among those involved.

**New Hope Program (Zumbro Valley Mental Health Center)**

47 NW 13 1/2 Street. (507) 287-2099.

For refugees or mentally ill from Southeast Asia. Program provides mental health and related services to assist adjustment to their life in a new environment: cross-cultural social adjustment counseling, diagnostic assessments, individual/family counseling, screening and referrals for psychiatric and chemical dependency needs, court-ordered counseling for DUI and other legal problems. Languages: Cambodian, Lao, Vietnamese, Hmong.

**Legal Assistance of Olmsted County (LAOC)**

1812 Second Street SW. (507) 287-2036.

LAOC is a non-profit organization, which provides low-cost legal services to income-qualified residents of Olmsted County. We handle family law and tenant issues directly through the office, and other types of issues through the Volunteer Attorneys Program. We DO NOT handle criminal or fee-generating issues.

**Olmsted County Community Services**

151 Fourth Street SE. (507) 285- 8382.

285-8382 – Income Maintenance

285-7009 – Social Services

285-8164 – Community Corrections

285-8205 – Veterans Administration

285-8370 – Public Health Services (2100 Campus Drive SE)

285-8785 – Community Action Program (1421 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue SE)

Comprehensive response to multiple needs of children, families, and adults in Olmsted County, including financial assistance, adult intake, chemical dependency, adult mental health, home and community care, developmental disabilities, adolescent services, adoption, foster care, and day care, and more.

**Rochester Adult Literacy Program**

Heintz Center. 1926 College View Road, SE. (507) 287-1475.

Offers courses for adults in: basic skills, GED preparation, Adult Diploma, English language and ESL, Family Literacy. Some courses are free.

**Work Force Development, Inc.**

300 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW. (507) 292-5152.

Helps people rejoin the workforce and retain jobs. For computer training, call the Job Training Center at (507) 529-2700.

**Community Food Response**

Bethel Lutheran Church. 810 SE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue. (507) 281-5061.

CHECK THIS ENTIRE ENTRY!

Surplus food distribution program. Hours are M/W/F, 5:00-6:30 pm. Please bring proof of number of residents in your home for registration purposes (one-time registration).

**Community Action for Racial Equality (CARE)**

Mr. Larry Stafford, 704 SE 4<sup>th</sup> Street. (507) 285-3187.

CHECK THIS ENTIRE ENTRY!

Advocates networking with organizations seeking racial justice, equal protection, equal rights, and equal opportunities.

**Olmsted Community Action Program (CAP)**

1421 Third Street SE. (507) 285-8785.

CHECK THIS ENTIRE ENTRY!

Olmsted CAP bridges resources in order to remove the causes and effects of poverty. CAP helps to develop the self-reliant behavior of individuals who are living on a low income, and encourages the awareness and involvement of the community in resolving the problems of poverty.

**National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**

PO Box 6472. (507) 282-7544

CHECK THIS ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER!

This local branch of the nation's oldest civil rights organization advocates for human and civil rights for African Americans and other peoples of color. Meets 3rd Monday of each month at City Hall, conference room.

**Bosnia and Herzegovina Association**

16 SW 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue. (507) 292-6648.

Organizes sports programs for children and community events, such as picnics, get-togethers, and cultural programs for community interaction.

**Center for Victims of Torture**

717 East River Road. Minneapolis, MN 55455. (612) 626-1400.

Support, rehabilitation, information, and referral for victims of torture by foreign governments or foreign governmental agencies politically motivated, and families of victims (includes former prisoners of war, refugees, American citizens detained and tortured abroad).

**Organization of Somali Affairs**

620 Second Street, Suite 100. call Abdinur Abdulle at (507) 281-0220.

CHECK THIS ENTIRE ENTRY!

Offers joint cultural orientation and support services in the following areas: finding and registering for ESL classes, translation/interpretation, questions concerning school/education.

medical referral assistance, crime prevention programs. To reach the United Organization of Somali Women, ask for Dahabo Shiekh Ahmed.

**New Sudan American Hope**

1421 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue SE. Call Benson Giwa at (507) 285-5966.

CHECK THIS ENTIRE ENTRY!

Offers translation services and cross-cultural education, and employment/job training help to Sudanese immigrants/refugees.



## Report Catalogue

Minorities in Minnesota

Rochester

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